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ABSTRACT

Social policy for child welfare in Canada should be tested in terms of what it does to support the integrity of the family. The Canadian family in recent years has changed as infant morality rates have fallen, and as the number of illegitimate births, marriages, divorces, and women working has increased. Although the child population as a whole has declined, it is predicted that a new baby boom will emerge during the next 10 to 15 years. In the past, policy-makers and politicians have often not responded adequately to major social changes. With more children at risk than before child welfare services generally have expanded to meet new demands, but some provinces, for political reasons, did not expand services. There is a tendency among some Canadians to resist or reverse the growth of social services and the social changes of the past two decades. There has been also considerable reluctance among Canadians to implement programs in observance of the International Year of the Child although there are many disadvantaged children in Canada. At this time Canadians should commit themselves to planning for social reconstruction. A strong argument can be made for putting emphasis on the problems and needs of early childhood. The needs of children are crucial issues for public debate and policy-making. (Author/RH)

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THE CHILD AND SOCIAL POLICY IN CANADA

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THE CHILD AND SOCIAL POLICY IN CANADA

General Considerations

We are faced with some interesting questions in this International Year of the Child 1979. Has the international community, in particular the United Nations, been overtaken by what Oscar Wilde once called the English vice, periodic outbursts of public morality? Getting the Year of the Child off the ground has certainly been difficult, and it is still too soon to say in Canada whether what we will achieve is an outburst of sentimentality, and an excess of hand-wringing. The Saskatchewan singer, Connie Kaldor recently sang a song called "Sing Me Something Sentimental". I would like to rephrase this theme and apply it to the International Year of the Child, "Sing Me Something Unsentimental" about children. By this I mean we should try to be fairly clear-sighted about children and about our own attitudes towards them. They are the young of the human species and that says a lot about their potential for good and for ill.

Sociologists use the term "socialization" to describe the process whereby children gradually learn the customs of adult society, learn what is expected of them, and learn how to imitate and repeat the actions of adults, until they in turn are adults and transmit to their own children their own values and customs. Continuity and tradition are strong elements in this process of socialization, but that does not mean that one generation is necessarily a replication of the previous one. There are many intervening factors which shape each succeeding generation. Some of these factors may be cultural and play a more important role at some stages of childhood than at others.

For many years there was an academic dispute about what was most important in human development, nature or nurture, heredity or environment. This argument is still not totally dead. What has been learned in the last thirty years is just how much learning and development occurs in the early weeks and months of a child's life. Development is really an ongoing process from the time of

conception and continues after birth and on through childhood. Moreover what happens in the early stages has a profound effect on what happens later, and indeed on what can happen.

This area of human life might seem to be very removed from a discussion of social policy, but I believe that the weight of scientific evidence so clearly indicates that pregnancy and early childhood are crucial stages in a human development, that they should be subjects for public concern.

Social policies, briefly defined, are policies devised by governments that affect or relate to people. Much that governments do might therefore be said to fall in the social policy area. Social policies may be explicit or implicit; their consequences may be intended or unintended. Social policies extend more widely than the social security system, but within this system lie the major social services, income security, health, education, personal social services, housing, employment and so on. Social policies are an integral part of the tax system, though their precise effects are not always obvious. Although generally social policies might be thought to benefit citizens and society, their effect on some people may not be beneficial.

When we come to consider the impact of social policies on children and families we have to keep in mind some of the above considerations.

Social policy is really about working out solutions to human problems, and the process of policy making tends to be a messy, piecemeal process in which we often seem to take one step forward and two back. Government interventions on behalf of children have become a world-wide phenomenon during the last century. It is easy to deplore this tendency, but we would be unwise to yearn for a golden age when the sovereignty of the family was unassailed. I doubt very much whether most of us would wish to be placed in the family setting of our ancestors. Material conditions were often harsh and nutritional standards often poor. Mortality rates were high and marriages were often broken due to death in child birth or other health hazards. Children were expected to work from an early age, and there were few educational opportunities. Leisure was unknown, and entertainment opportunities pretty rare. Personal relationships

within family groups were also subject to, and perhaps a reflection of, difficult living conditions.

The family as we know it today has been conditioned by the enormous social and economic changes of the last century. Childhood as a status and a role has been increasingly differentiated from adulthood, and the modern nation-state has played a large part in this process. The state has regulated childhood for a variety of reasons, partly out of compassion, partly out of a need to have a better educated work-force in the future, partly out of a need for social control. Youth or adolescence has more recently been seen and designated as a distinct stage or role in life, and again for similar reasons. Admission to adult status is often a ritual in primitive tribes and in some modern religious groups. In our society there is no such clearly marked transition. Biological and social and legal maturity have tended to diverge. Yet at the same time children and young people are exposed to adult standards of behaviour and world events which have a considerable impact on their lives, while they remain still spectators and not participants. For a wide variety of reasons childhood and youth constitute between a quarter and a third of normal life expectancy in developed nations, and in terms of actual years this is a much longer time period than in the past.

Children and young people are therefore in a dependent position for a long time in which things are done for, or to them; it is the nature of what these things are with which we are concerned in an examination of social policy and the child.

We should first consider some major social and demographic changes of the recent past.

Social and Demographic Changes

Infant mortality rates have fallen fairly steadily during the last forty years; this is true for neonatal deaths occurring in the first 28 days after birth, and even more so for post-neonatal deaths between four weeks and one year of age. Infant mortality can also be looked at in terms of endogenous deaths, that is those due to congenital or inherited disease, and exogenous deaths, those due to causes or diseases that are not congenital or inherited.

The exogenous deaths show the most dramatic decline in the last forty years, but in the 1970s endogenous deaths too have fallen sharply. We have a situation therefore when the chances of surviving the first year of life are very much better than they have ever been before.

While there has been improvement in the infant mortality rate for registered Indian children, it is still twice as high as for the general population, and it is even higher for Inuit children. In terms of all causes of death perinatal morbidity accounted for 4.6 per cent of deaths in Indian and Inuit in 1974, and 1.5 per cent for all Canadians. Crude birth rates in the registered Indian and Inuit populations, have fallen steadily in the last twenty years, but still remain higher than for the total Canadian population.

In terms of all births we are now in a demographic trough. The all-time peak was 479,000 in 1959; the low point was reached in 1973 with 343,000 and in the last few years the figure has risen to 360,000, with a very slight increase in the birth rate. The upturn in births since 1974 is itself a consequence of the baby boom which really continued from the early 1940s to the late 1950s. Illegitimate births climbed to about 35,600 in 1970, then declined, but may again be climbing. It is likely that the majority of illegitimate births are to women under the age of 20. In the period 1959 to 1974 the proportions of all illegitimate births born to mothers under the age of 20 rose from 35 per cent to 48 per cent. There were 39,000 legitimate and illegitimate births to women under the age of 20 in 1975, and 38,000 in 1976.

Over 10 per cent of all births are to women under 20. Average age at first marriage has fallen from $27\frac{1}{2}$ for men and $24\frac{1}{2}$ for women in 1941 to just over $24\frac{1}{2}$ for men and just under $22\frac{1}{2}$ for women in 1974. The average age of all mothers, married and unmarried, at the birth of the first child fell from $24\frac{1}{2}$ in 1951 to just over $23\frac{1}{2}$ in 1974. The mean age at child-bearing is about 27.

There have been in the region of 200,000 marriages each year during the 1970s compared with 132,500 in 1959. But in the same period a growing proportion of marriages involve people previously divorced, 3.9 per cent of men and women marrying in 1959, 12.0 per cent of men and 10.8 per cent of women in 1975.

Reform of the divorce law in 1968 led to a doubling of the number of

divorces in one year, 11,000 in 1968, 26,000 in 1969, 51,000 in 1975. The average number of children involved in divorces remained roughly the same during the 1970s, 1.1 or 1.2 (or 2.1 or 2.0 for these divorces actually involving children). The total number of children affected each year by divorces rose from 32,000 in 1970 to 59,000 in 1975.

The number of women in the labour force doubled in the period 1961 to 1975 from 1.7 million to 3.5 million. The labour participation rate for married women rose from 20.8 to 38.4 per cent. By 1973 the rate for women aged 20-54 with children under the age of 16 was 35 per cent.

A consequence of some of these social and demographic developments is that during the post-war period Canada lived with an ever-growing child population. In 1959 there were the most ever one year olds; in 1965 the most ever 1-4 year olds, in 1966 the most ever 0-14 year olds, in 1968 the most ever 5-9 year olds, in 1969 the most ever 0-19 year olds, in 1974 the most ever 10-14 year olds, and at present the most ever 15-19 year olds.

The child population as a whole therefore has been declining since the late 1960s, by about 800,000 for the 0-14 year olds between 1966 and 1977, and by about 400,000 for the 0-19 year olds since 1969. Now we have about 5.8 million 0-14 year olds and 8.2 million 0-19 year olds.

The short-term adjustments to this changed population picture have been painful in terms of declining school enrolments, closed schools, fewer jobs for teachers, reduced pressure for day care places. But it is important that these adjustments should not be too drastic. They have coincided in the 1970s with worsening economic conditions and the incentive to slash expenditures is very strong. But quite apart from arguments for improving the quality of education and day care services, the upturn in the number of births since 1974 does mean a further wave of recruits for the education system, and they may have already contributed to the earlier demand for day care services during the mid-seventies.

Some of the new births may be the result of delayed family formation. But we can I think say that a new baby boom not of the same dimensions as in the 1940s and 1950s, but still fairly significant, will be occupying our attention during the next ten to fifteen years.

Immigration has been an important influence on Canada's growth in population. The population grew from 14.0 million in 1951 to 18.2 million in 1961, an increase of 30.2 per cent, and to 21.6 million in 1971, an increase of 18.3 per cent in the period since 1961. Of the 4.2 million increase between 1951 and 1961, 1.1 million were immigrants (a net figure of 1.5 million immigrants and 0.4 million emigrants). Of the 3.4 million increase between 1961 and 1971, 0.6 million were immigrants (a net figure of 1.4 million immigrants and 0.8 emigrants).

Whereas 15.3 per cent of the population were foreign born in 1971, children and young people who were foreign born, constituted only 5.1 per cent of the population under the age of 20. Of these 437,460 children who were foreign born, 322,745 came to Canada in the years 1961-1971.

Some 36,628 immigrants in 1977 were children and young people under the age of 20; they represented 31.9 per cent of immigrants during the year, or 0.4 per cent of the Canadian population under the age of 20.

Although immigration has been a major factor in Canada's population growth since the Second World War, its influence on the size of the child population is greatest in respect to the children born in Canada to immigrants rather than in terms of children and young people as immigrants themselves.

Consequences of Social Change

Some fairly major changes have thus been occurring in Canadian society in the recent past. They have had a cumulative impact, I believe, and may have induced in the public mind a sense of uncontrollable change, even at times a sense of optimism, whereas a falling one has been associated with economic recession during the 1970s, and perhaps a certain feeling of depression has resulted, which is irrational but understandable.

It is important I believe to see that some of these changes are a part of long run social trends, which could be predicted long ago. Declining school enrolments in the late 1970s could have been predicted ten years ago, when the population of children and young people was at an all time high. These social changes are significant, and our social policies have not really taken adequate account of them. They are not though a cause for despondency or

alarm. Yet I think it is valid to say that insufficient attention has been paid to them by policy-makers. Insufficient may be the wrong word--perhaps enough care has not been taken in reading long term trends.

I said at the outset that we have to avoid being sentimental in our judgement of what is good for children. It is so easy to be moralistic and deplore the rising number of divorces or of working mothers, but we cannot be sure that children are any worse off as a consequence. The effect on children of having a working mother may be beneficial, or it may be harmful. There are few if any definitive studies. Many mothers do part-time jobs, and as a consequence many fathers spend more time caring for their children. The crucial question is always the quality of the substitute care provided for the child when the mother works.

It is quite common to hear politicians bemoan the breakdown of family life, but it is less common to hear of them taking positive steps to see that especially vulnerable children, for example, the children of single, separated or divorced parents receive the good substitute care they require. Child day care is one area where policy-makers and politicians have failed abysmally to recognize a major social change that has occurred, and that is unlikely to be reversed. Most politicians are now wise enough not to say that a woman's place is in the home; they are not wise enough to recognize that there are social consequences which require recognition and remedy.

I said earlier that children stand a better chance these days of surviving their first year of life. Generally also the death rate for children aged 1-14 years has fallen. Moreover approximately two-thirds of child deaths are due to accidents, of which half are related to motor vehicles. The death rate for young people aged 15-24 years has tended to rise since 1961 for men, and since 1966 for women. Accidents are a major cause of death among teenagers. But suicide also is a growing cause of death among young people. There are no simple explanations for some of these developments. But it is reasonable to believe that some of these deaths among children and young people could be prevented.

Child abuse is not in my view growing to epidemic proportions. Child abuse and child battering though are serious matters. I believe the discovery

of the battered baby syndrome by pediatricians has brought renewed concern about the perennial problems of child neglect and cruelty to children. Improved child welfare services have led to a growing awareness of the problem of child neglect. There is justified public concern when children at risk of abuse actually die as a consequence of cruelty.

My own child welfare research indicates a growing level of activity in the child welfare services during the last twenty years. More children are being admitted to care and more are being discharged each year, and this holds true for the proportion of the child population involved; it also has grown. Proportionately more children are in care than there were twenty years ago. As the number of illegitimate births has fallen since the high point reached in 1970, so also proportionately fewer unmarried mothers are relinquishing their babies for adoption. One logical consequence is that the proportion of children admitted to care for reasons of neglect has risen, and this factor combined with the increased level of activity in the child welfare services suggests that child neglect in its many forms continues to be a major social problem. It does not mean that child neglect is necessarily growing. It does mean that child welfare services are increasingly reaching out to families and children where neglect is perceived to be a problem.

It becomes clear I think that child neglect and child abuse are relative terms in the way that poverty is a relative concept. In its extremest form child abuse may be easy to define, but it is not always easy to detect. The battered baby syndrome, for example, was really only identified when doctors started fitting together events in a child's life occurring over a period of time and also doing the same for the lives of the parents both in relation to the present child, any previous children, and the parents' own childhood. Child abuse, like poverty, was rediscovered in the 1960s. But child abuse and child neglect are not new phenomena, any more than wife beating is a new phenomenon.

Once such a rediscovery occurs, it is defined according to contemporary values and standards. Since the mid-sixties provincial governments have amended their child welfare legislation, in some cases several times, to make the reporting of suspected child abuse mandatory. They have set up reporting

registers and appointed child abuse coordinators, but by and large they have not changed the basic child welfare services. The number of reported cases of abuse has increased for several years after these changes have occurred, but generally seems then to have levelled off.

Generally increased vigilance has brought predictable results, more reported cases of child abuse. But this process is rather like police detection rates; better detection does not mean more crime, nor does it necessarily mean less crime in future, unless a high level of vigilance is maintained.

I have indicated that the general level of activity in the child welfare services has increased in the last twenty years; this is partly because until 1969 there was a growing number of children in the general population; more children were thus at risk, and the services themselves expanded to meet the demands. Since 1969 the child population has declined in number, and at any one time there are fewer children in care, about 80,000 compared with 100,000. But as I indicated earlier more children are being admitted to, and discharged from, care, and this is increasingly for protection purposes. I believe the renewed concern about child abuse has served to reinforce this trend, as has the expanded staffing of the child welfare services. The courts too play a role in this process and I would say that they too are subject to the pressures and concerns of the day.

If child neglect is a relative or adjustable concept, it follows that the social response is also likely to change according to changing economic and social circumstances. In the early 1960s child welfare officials in many provinces complained that they had insufficient staff and resources to perform their statutory duties. Things improved as federal cost-sharing became available after 1966, but even so some provinces lagged far behind others and some for political and ideological reasons did not expand their services. Since the mid-seventies we have been faced with the same problem of fiscal restraint, and one consequence is likely to be that again the concept of child neglect will be less rigorous in practice than it was becoming.

It becomes obvious that policy issues involving children are exceedingly complex; they are governed by social, economic and demographic realities which

change over time. In the child welfare area as in health and education the definition of need, of what it is desirable that children should receive, is a flexible and relative concept. There are real resource constraints. Yet it is important that the phenomenon of child abuse should not again be lost to sight. Progress made should not be progress lost. This consideration applies to other areas of social life, to early child health and education services, for example. It is likely that we do not know and will never know the full extent of serious child neglect and abuse. We should remain vigilant.

Turning to more general issues some theorists argue that it is society itself which is abusive towards children. Again I think we should apply the test of sentimentality to this argument. Is it for example valid to want to shelter children from the social realities of the day? Might it not be that this exposure is an essential part of the learning or socialization process? I remember in the field of accountancy there used to be three types of error that one could make, errors of omission, errors of commission, and errors of principle. It may be useful to apply these principles to the question of child care, and to what we do for, or to children.

It seems to me that society can certainly fail to do certain things to help and protect children. There are numerous historical examples of this type of negligence. Equally well though some of what a society does for or to children may create other problems. Education, for example, may seem to be intended to help children learn to use their capacities to the fullest, but the educational system may in fact inhibit or frustrate these capacities. The education system may in fact be about things other than what is conventionally known as education. It is certainly about socialization. One important element of socialization is social control. Children are expected to conform to the norms and expectations of adult society. The cost of this conformity may be some loss of creative capacity. Another cost may be the definition of some children as non-conformers, children who are or become social misfits, delinquents and so on. We should I think be aware of children's own sense of disillusionment with the educational system. The number of apathetic adolescents in our society is really too great to be ignored. What is it that turns many children off who were eager to learn when they were younger?

Finally I think there are errors of principle which provide perhaps

some answer to the last questions. I am reminded of the title the famous British sociologist Barbara Wootton gave her autobiography "In a world I never made". She meant by this title that the world we live in is a very imperfect place, and this is largely mankind's own doing. The remedy if there be one lies in our own hands.

What kind of world, what kind of future, are we offering our children? We live in what Daniel Bell, the American sociologist, has called a hedonistic society; the pleasure principle has come to be paramount in western society. Tawney, the British socialist thinker, writing earlier this century called one of his books "The Acquisitive Society", and John Kenneth Galbraith, writing several decades later, called one of his books "The Affluent Society".

It is true that the work ethic and the materialistic incentives of working have provided much of the dynamic behind the prosperity and rise in living standards in western nations during the twentieth century. But as with child neglect, as with poverty, prosperity too is a relative concept, and again we seem unable to draw the line and say what degree of prosperity is acceptable and what is unacceptable. Instead we seem to have to go on wanting more of everything, until external constraints impose a limit. We have in other words found it very difficult to define progress in anything other than material terms. Yet we never seem to know when we are well off.

My own feeling is that children and young children might well say to us "we never made this world". They might well reject the assumptions on which we have built society. That they do not do so is not necessarily a cause for optimism. In the area of material objects we overload our children with toys and gifts to which they tend to attach less and less value.

The danger for us and them is that we might accept an imperfect world and not try to change it. There is a tendency in some quarters to resist or even reverse the social changes of the past two decades, to resist women's equal partnership in the world of work, to resist child day care, to resist the growth of social services generally, to hark back to the good old days of medical services for the rich and not for the poor. Do we really want that?

If though these important social changes are viewed as appropriate reflections of, or responses to, a changing world, then any turning back of

the clock is likely to make western societies less able to respond to the needs and challenges of the late twentieth century. Children are uniquely able to respond to change provided that we do not load them with the inhibitions, concepts and disabilities of the past. The late D.W. Winnicott, a noted pediatrician and child psychiatrist, used the concept of the "facilitating environment" to describe the ideal circumstances in which children should be raised. That is what the 1979 International Year of the Child logo represents. We should ask ourselves whether the environment we have provided for children to grow up in is truly facilitating, or whether in some respects it is in fact disabling.

If the childhood of abusing parents is relevant to an understanding of child abuse, it seems to me to be equally relevant to ask what else is transmitted from one generation to another. What for example are children to make of the commercial exploitation of sex, of the simultaneous promotion and condemnation of drinking, or disapproving smoking but raising taxes from the sale of cigarettes, of preaching peace but practising violence in personal relationships and international affairs? What parallels are there to be drawn between violence in contact sports and competitiveness in business affairs? Moral ambiguity is of course nothing new in adult behavior, but what is perhaps new for today's generations of children is the remorseless way this ambiguity is impressed upon children through the press, through television, through everyday life. Adults are, it seems to me, increasingly seen by children to be saying "Do as I say not as I do".

If adult behavior is in fact transparently hypocritical, and if adult institutions, schools, businesses, governments, are also seen to be saying and doing mutually contradictory things, then children are in fact being presented with very unsatisfactory role models. Games adults play are likely to be games children seek to play.

The challenge presented by the International Year of the Child lies in attempting to resolve some of this moral ambiguity whether in personal, national or international affairs. My daughter recently asked if I felt that saving up pennies during Lent would really help poor people in other countries. I had to say that I didn't know. My answer, of course, reflected

my own scepticism, it might be cynicism, that international aid organizations really did help relieve and even remedy poverty. This issue is a real one and a current one. The nations involved with UNCTAD, the United Nations Commission for Trade and Development, have been wrestling with just these kinds of issues, the sharing of wealth between the rich and the poor nations of the world. If we are seeking a goal for the future, a way out of some of our present dilemmas and dangers, active cooperation between peoples and nations to alleviate and eliminate poverty might be the way to go.

I said earlier that getting the International Year of the Child off the ground has proved difficult; this is true at the United Nations itself, and at the national level. Canada is no exception. There has been considerable reluctance on the part of the federal government to provide leadership and more importantly to provide funds to get a worthwhile national commission going. There are real doubts in my mind that much can now be achieved by or through initiatives at the national level. One of the intentions of the International Year was that each country should focus on the needs of particular groups of disadvantaged children within its own borders.

There are some readily identifiable target groups among Canadian children. Native children are as a group more disadvantaged than other Canadian children. Adequate recognition of the true degree of this disadvantage would require a truly cooperative and inter-disciplinary effort on the part of the federal, provincial and municipal governments and the full participation of the native peoples themselves. The range of needs is long but includes adequate housing, adequate income, adequate health services, adequate education services, in short adequate opportunities. The failure of the federal and provincial governments to work out satisfactory revenue sharing agreements for the support of these services for native people is a national scandal. No where is this more acute than in the case of child welfare services for status Indian children, where the children fall between the two stools of federal/provincial intransigence.

My own research in the child welfare services suggests that children in single parent or disrupted families are likely to need special help. We should devise policies that support the integrity of these families rather than merely provide rescue services when breakdown occurs. We need also policies

that are non-stigmatizing, but that provide help automatically when changes in family composition or life-style occur. A variety of allowances is provided in France for instance, which relate to families where only one income is received, where there is only one parent and so on.

In Canada we have I believe been somewhat unimaginative in relating to changing family needs. Family allowances were introduced towards the end of the Second World War, and then were left pretty well untouched until 1974, when they were tripled in size and indexed to the cost of living. They were paid for two years in this way, then they were frozen for one year at the same level as part of the anti-inflation program, then they were unfrozen for one year, and then this year they have been cut-back by about 20 per cent, though for the time being they are still indexed to the cost of living.

At the same time the new child tax credit has been introduced which gives \$200 per year for each child in families with \$18,000 or less annual income. What is not said is that about \$71 of this \$200 is lost in the family allowance cut. \$200 represents 1.1 per cent of \$18,000. The net figure of \$129 represents 0.7 per cent. This policy innovation affords some dangerous precedents. It involves an erosion of the universal family allowances. It requires "take up" by the eligible population--this is very unlikely to match the 99 per cent "take up" rate for family allowances. What is also lost is the flexibility of the monthly family allowance income thus reduced, and its contribution to the family grocery budget. This policy innovation has introduced a number of other factors which have little to do with helping poor families. The point to recognize is that this policy innovation provides extremely marginal benefits which could have been provided just as easily by indexing the family allowances at their old level.

One reason the child tax credit was introduced was because the federal and provincial governments could not reach an agreement on supplementing the incomes of the working poor. The federal government went ahead any way, and most provincial governments have been reluctant to disregard the credit for social assistance purposes. The benefit to children in poor families of this innovation is thus minimal. Thus policy is being made in Canada in this International Year of the Child.

Appropriate Responses to Social Change

I have tried to suggest that now is not the time to cut back important social programs. The recent federal proposal to cut health services on Indian reserves was irresponsible. The federal go-slow on housing for Indians is also irresponsible. I believe the social trends of recent years will not simply stop because we have economic problems. Female participation in the labour force may be accelerated because of the need for more family income.

I think at this time we should commit ourselves as our parents did during the dark years of the Second World War to forward planning and social reconstruction. If we are to cope with the demands of the future, we have to be forward looking in our thinking. I believe, unlike some social commentators, that the major social programs of the post-war era have been immensely successful. There really is no comparison between the health programs of today and those of thirty years ago. But still in the mid-sixties there were some Canadian families saddled with immense burdens of debt due to health costs incurred in the past. That is the case for many American families even today, and that is why for all its prosperity the United States still has health problems, which countries of less wealth have managed to eliminate.

I believe there is a strong argument to be made for putting a lot of emphasis in our thinking on the problems and needs of early childhood. A multi-disciplinary approach is needed. Special income support programs are needed for young families. Special emphasis is needed on basic health programs for pre-school children. Special emphasis needs to be placed on the detection and prevention of handicapping conditions, be they physical, emotional or social. We need the different professional groups and service systems to work more closely together than they have ever done in the past. We need to make more investment in appropriate television programming for children. We probably need less television time, but programs of much higher quality.

In the education system we need to place more emphasis on creativity, and less insistence on conformity. We need I think to encroach less on the freedom of children. I really see no reason why young children have homework from schools. Yet as an alternative to poor television, homework may be preferable. What is needed, of course, is to reinforce the joy of learning.

For older children we need a better balance between the pressures of the adult world, the pressures of the children's own peer group, and the pressures of the school system. One of the more surprising features of the Canadian education system is the lack of vocational courses, and this is paralleled by the lack of apprenticeship opportunities after young people leave school. There is a need in our society for all sorts of practical skills, for motor mechanics, plumbers, electricians and so on. In other words formal scholastic attainment should not be elevated above every other activity in high school. Nor should the opposite extreme be emphasis on competitive sport to the exclusion of other sporting, recreational and cultural activities.

One can go on at great length about different aspects of childhood, which ultimately fall within the realm of social policy. We have approached these different aspects in too compartmentalized a way in the past, and perpetuated these divisions in separate bureaucratized organizations, school boards, departments of health, departments of social services and so on.

If we are interested in raising whole children, we need to recognize that the family is not, and should not be the sole, coordinating mechanism for producing the well rounded end product we are so desirous of. The family's importance remains central, but any parent knows just how formidable is the challenge of juggling home and work and all the services and activities their children need. It can be a full time job chauffeuring children from hockey rink, to gymnasium, to piano teacher, to dentist, to ballet, and to eye doctor. Some of these tasks are optional, but many are not. Moreover they are not particularly life enhancing for the person who has to do the chauffeuring. Encounters with some of the professionals involved in these activities can also sometimes be downright demoralizing for parents.

If families are to work well, they need some help. Employers have a real responsibility for not making impossible demands on employees. Working hours need to be more flexible. Truck drivers and business men should not be expected to be away from home for days and weeks at a time, or if this happens, time off or family time should be provided.

We need in other words some social reconstruction; we need a certain amount of ongoing repairs to our society. These social needs are not being

addressed while we squabble about national unity, and while federal and provincial governments are at dagger's drawn about a thousand and one issues. I do not believe that our political leaders offer a particularly wholesome example to the young of today. Perhaps they should deal with issues more and political advantage less.

I am trying to suggest that the needs of children are issues for public debate and policy-making. If we fail to engage in this type of systems maintenance work, ultimately we are all the losers. Far more than in the past childhood is a public or social policy issue. We may welcome or regret this fact of modern society, but we should not ignore it.

I think we have and should have a partnership in developed countries between the family and the state in the care and upbringing of children. It is unrealistic in my view to hand back to the modern family responsibilities and burdens which it is ill-equipped to carry. This sentimental and impractical idea is based less on an assessment of the family's capabilities and more on a wish to reduce the state's involvement in our daily lives. If instead we use the family as the pivotal principle by which to judge the activities of the state, and of the other major institutions in our society, including employers and unions, then I think we have the basis for some sensible social planning. We can judge the policies of these institutions by the test of whether what they do enhance and support the integrity of the family or serve to undermine it. In this way both explicit and implicit social policies can be tested. We can ask whether what these institutions do makes the family's primary task of child-rearing more or less easy. We can apply the test to other life stages and functions of the family as well, but the care and nurturance of each new generation of children comes first.

With this approach we avoid some of the more moralistic assertions about marriage, divorce and single parents, but do assert a moral belief in the rights of children and the central role of the family in meeting these rights. We can then recognize the special quality of childhood. We can then try to preserve the child's joy in living, learning and playing. We can then learn to enjoy our children more.